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SUBJECT: TURKISH MEDIA REACTION
THURSDAY, JANUARY 21, 2010

Media Highlights:

How the US Is Playing

"Bad Surprise for Obama" (Milliyet)
Media is united in calling it a defeat for President Obama as Democrats lose their majority in the Senate with the victory of Republican Scott Brown in the elections in Massachusetts. In "Election Shock for Obama in Democrat Stronghold," liberal Radikal thinks, "as Obama fails to achieve his promises, he loses both public support and now his numerical advantage in the US Congress," noting "this will put Obama's healthcare reform in trouble." In "Democrats Lost Majority in the Senate, This Will Cause Difficulties for Obama," leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet says that as a result "political balances will change dramatically," thus "Obama's important initiatives will be disrupted." Islamist oriented Yeni Safak headlines, "Obama Lost His Stronghold," and opines that "on the anniversary of his first year in office, Obama had his first defeat in the 38 year-stronghold in Massachusetts." Mainstream Hurriyet calls it a "Naked Blow to Obama," and highlights that "with the victory of the Republican Brown, whose naked pictures appeared in Cosmopolitan back in 80s, Obama lost his 'super majority' in the Senate."

In the Headlines

Bloody Coup Plan Allegations (Milliyet)
All papers and TV channels extensively cover the news about a 5,000 page coup scenario published by the leftist Taraf daily. According to the Taraf story, a military coup plan titled "Balyoz" (sledgehammer) was drafted in 2003, shortly after the AKP came to power by the then 1st Army Commander General Cetin Dogan. According to the plan, the military was to systematically create chaos in society through violent acts like bombing the Beyazit and Fatih Mosques and the shooting down of a Turkish military jet in the Aegean to prove that AKP was insufficient in foreign policy. Conservative-nationalist Turkiye headline reads "Chilling Scenarios", mainstream Vatan headlines "The Last Sledgehammer from Taraf Daily" and liberal Radikal's headline questions "Is it a Coup Plan or Scenario?" Milliyet reports that yesterday evening retired General Cetin Dogan made a statement through a web site (t24.com.tr)

noting that the alleged plan was a war game scenario which was prepared within the context of the 'war game, exercise and seminars' and that such scenarios are prepared in the military all the time and all commanders are aware of such scenarios.

FM Davutoglu: "Yerevan Should Remain Committed to Its Signature" (Hurriyet)

All papers today report that Foreign Minister Davutoglu was called by his Armenian counterpart Nalbandian while Davutoglu was in Jeddah. The Turkish Foreign Minister expressed Turkish concerns about the recent developments and said "Yerevan is expected to clarify the situation and to show political determination to pass the protocols." Davutoglu rejected allegations that the Turkish side was delaying the process and reminded Armenia that Armenia was behind Turkey in the process of approving the protocols. Islamist-oriented Zaman headlines "Erdogan Tells Yerevan Not to Touch Protocol" and says that in a press conference in Jeddah yesterday PM Erdogan criticized the Armenian judiciary's intervention in the protocols between the two countries by saying "Armenian Constitutional Court's decision is unacceptable. We sent the protocols to the parliament without any change, however, Armenia tries to operate on the protocols. If it is not corrected, it will harm the process." Mainstream Haber Turk reports that the main opposition CHP leader Deniz Baykal claimed the protocols signed between Turkey and Armenia are invalid after the ruling of the Armenian Constitutional Court. MHP leader Bahceli, on his part, called on the government to withdraw the protocols from the parliament's agenda.

Commentary. In "Collision Foretold" columnist Murat Yetkin of

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liberal Radikal warns about upcoming problems that Turkish politics will have to deal with and highlights the Armenia protocol as one of the major ones: "Ankara reacted to the Armenian Constitutional Court's reference to a genocide while sending the signed protocols to its parliament. We understand that there was an exchange of reproach between FM Davutoglu and Armenian FM Nalbandian over a phone conversation. Armenia, on the other hand, is reacting to a link made by Turkey about Turkish parliament's ratification and a solution to Nagorno Karabakh between Azerbaijan and Armenia. Prime Minister Erdogan made this link repeatedly and also Turkish internal politics forces it to be so. However neither Russia nor the United States want Turkey to tie the protocol with Karabakh issue. In this regard, the position of the US is particularly important because the April 24 genocide lobby in the Congress has started working already. The signatures reached over 140."

Mainstream Hurriyet's Oktay Eksi thinks that there is a mistake only in the Yerevan diplomacy: "Armenian court clearly made a link between protocols and territorial demands as well as genocide claims. This is an effort to kill the protocol spirit entirely." However Cuneyt Ulsever in the same paper has a different argument: "What the Armenian court did was making a reference to the Armenian Declaration of Independence which is no secret and which is something the Turkish Foreign Ministry should have known better before signing these protocols. Moreover it was Turkey first that imposed a precondition for ratification process when PM Erdogan on many occasions made a link between protocols and a solution to Karabakh." Mainstream Milliyet's Taha Akyol observes disappointment in both ends: "When signing the protocols, as an immediate outcome, Yerevan was expecting to see the border opened and Ankara was hoping to see a historian commission to examine the genocide. None of it happened and with the Armenian court's ruling the protocol spirit is gone already."

Greece Doesn't Want Turkish Commander at Larissa Base (Cumhuriyet) Leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet reports Greek daily Ta Nea claims the Papandreou government does not want a "Turkish commander" at the Larissa Base, the second largest NATO air headquarters in the Aegean. The Greeks, otherwise, threatened to veto the restructuring of the Alliance at the February 4-5 NATO summit to be held in Istanbul. Greek Defense Ministry officials have also demanded a Greek commander be appointed as the deputy of the US commander at NATO's HQ in Izmir, Cumhuriyet cites the Greek press.

Banned pro-Kurdish DTP appeals to European court (Milliyet, Zaman)

Former members of the pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party (DTP), recently closed down by the Constitutional Court, have filed a case with the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) in which they argue that the Constitutional Court is not impartial since it was established by a constitution drafted by the military junta that took over the government on Sept. 12, 1980. Mainstream Milliyet notes that BDP Sirnak deputy Hasip Kaplan stressed that the 78 page case file has been received by the ECHR jurists already.

The Heron Failure (Aksam)

Mainstream Aksam reports that after Israel's failure to have the Heron drones "fly for 24 hours at an altitude of 30,000 feet," Turkey and Israel adjusted the deal between them to make the unmanned aircraft fly continuously for 6-8 hours. Five years ago, Turkey and Israe signed a drone deal worth USD 183 million, according to which Israel would deliver ten Herons to Turkey in 2007. Nevertheless, Israel has not yet been able to deliver any drones to Turkey, says Aksam.

TV Spotlight (CNN Turk)

"Hunger strike" staged by the former state tobacco and liquor monopoly "Tekel" workers has entered its third day.

Syrian acting vice-president Mohammad Nazif will visit Ankara on Thursday to meet with Prime Minister Erdogan.

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Turkey's elite business group TUSIAD will hold a meeting Thursday to pick a new president.

On January 28, the AK Party government will hold another "workshop" to discuss the problems of Alevis in Turkey.

Israeli Military Intelligence General Amos Yadlin warns Turkey is drawing closer toward Islamic radicalism and further from Israel and the West.

Human rights activists reported the death toll after four days of clashes between Muslim and Christian gangs in the Nigerian city of Jos and nearby communities has topped 464.

The US Patriot missiles soon to arrive in Poland will reportedly be located in Morag, near the Baltic coast, instead of on the outskirts of Warsaw.

The British government halts flights between Britain and Yemen over terrorism concerns in wake of the attempted bombing of a flight to Detroit last year.

A UN report suggests Afghans paid USD 2.5 billion in bribes over the past 12 months.

JEFFREY